

a much larger proportion of its time than is now given, even to so precious an exercise as prayer. What is needed, is not so much an extension of time, as a more skilful and earnest employment of the time now allowed for calling upon God. The prayers we have heard at Synods and General Assemblies have almost always been too long. Both in Scotland and in Canada we have known the special devotional "diet" at the opening of the Court, to be entirely occupied by two or three brethren, each praying for fifteen, twenty, or even thirty minutes. With rare exceptions, these long prayers are as wearisome to the spirit as they are to the flesh, and the very comprehensiveness for which they are sometimes praised, forms one of our chief objections to them. We want, at the opening of a Synod, short prayers with definite aims and compact expressions; and instead of two or three brethren, we should like to hear the voices of six or eight successively in prayer, interspersed with the singing of Psalms. At the commencement of each sederunt too, the prayer should not be lengthy, and should bear upon the matters of business about to be considered. If the devotional exercises were made more apposite and more lively than they usually are, there would be little reason to blame the members of Synod for remaining without till the commencement of actual business.

In this very important matter, no reform can be obtained without wisdom and tact in the Moderator; but not even the most judicious Moderator can effect the reform, unless sustained by the good sense of his ministerial brethren.

While on this topic, we may add the suggestion, that in order to increase the spiritual tone and profit of a meeting of Synod, the Court might advantageously resolve itself into a Brotherly Conference on the religious life of the Church—its impediments, decays, or revivals—and on the practical difficulties which ministers and kirk sessions encounter in furthering the work of the Lord. We know that many young pastors would gladly hear the ripe judgment of senior brethren on these matters. To maintain the interest of such a Conference however, and reap its benefits, it would be necessary sternly to repress the proneness to lengthy and tedious remarks. If the speakers were restricted to five minutes each, they would learn to dispense with introductions and repetitions, and give in a concise form the best results of their observation and experience.

The business of a Synod in a living growing Church is not confined to matters of internal administration. It relates also to the extension of the kingdom of Christ by Missions, by Sabbath-Schools, by itinerant evangelisation, and by the diffusion of sound religious literature. There is a tendency perhaps in young Churches, to exaggerate the legislative functions of a Synod, and to multiply minute and rigid laws, based on insufficient experience, which are soon suffered to fall into abeyance, or are remembered only to be repealed. We deem it more necessary to lay stress on the judicial and missionary duties which devolve on a properly constituted Synod. Such a court, or convocation, is at once our Judiciary and our Propaganda.

The judicial functions of the Synod are to be exercised with the greatest patience, calmness and care. "It belongeth to Synods and Councils, ministerially, to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience; to set down rules.